



Food

If distributed equally, the world produces enough food to feed everyone. There is an abundance of food. In fact, in this country, every day, in every city, far more edible food is discarded than is needed to feed those who do not have enough to eat.

Consider this. Before food reaches your table, it is produced and handled by farmers, coops, manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers. At every step, some perfectly edible food is discarded for a variety of business reasons. In the average city, approximately 10% of all solid waste is food. Nationally, this is an incredible total of 46 billion pounds per year, just under 200 pounds per person per year.

Estimates indicate that only 4 billion pounds of food per year would be required to completely end hunger in America. Clearly there is an abundance of edible, recoverable food being thrown away.

In order to recover this edible food and use it to feed people, three key elements must be combined. First, the food must be collected. Second, it must be prepared into a form appropriate for consumption. Third,

the food must be made easily accessible to those who are hungry.

The reason this is not already happening is no accident. We do not have a democratic say in how food is produced or distributed. People would certainly elect to eat. In hierarchical economies, the threat of the loss of a job allows owners to keep wages low. An underclass is the result of policies which encourage domination and violence. In our society, it is acceptable to profit from other people's suffering and misery.

Today, people who are living below the poverty line (less than \$9,069 annual income for family of three) are going hungry AT LEAST once a month. Over 30 million people are going hungry on a REGULAR basis. Astonishingly, less than 15% of the hungry are homeless. Moreover, the explosion of hunger has outstripped the ability of existing hunger relief programs, both governmental and private, to satisfy this crucial need.

Many people do not realize that the demographics of The Hungry have changed dramatically. Over the last decade, The Hungry have become:

- Younger: 12.9 million (40%) are children, the true victims of this tragedy.
- Poorer: 12.9 million (40%) live below poverty line. The gap is widening as the real income of bottom 4/5ths of population continues to decrease.
- More likely to be employed: 60% of poor families include workers. The number of working hungry rose 50% from 1978-1986.

- More likely to be female: 50% of poor families are headed by women.
- Less likely to overcome poverty.

Clearly, the majority of people going hungry today are not the stereotyped street person the media would have you believe.

Hungry people are children and single parents (mostly women), the working poor, the unemployed, the elderly, the chronically ill, and those on fixed income such as veterans and the handicapped. All of these people find themselves in the clutches of oppressive poverty even while trying to improve their condition.

In addition to the collection and distribution of surplus food, Food Not Bombs encourages vegetarianism. If more people were vegetarian and demanded organically grown, locally produced foods, this would encourage organic farming practices and support smaller farms. This, in turn, would make it easier to decentralize the means of food production and democratize the control over the quality of the food produced and the stewardship of the land. More people can be fed from one acre of land on vegetarian rather than meat based diet. The current meat-based diet eaten by our society allows for huge "agro-businesses", dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, results in the declining nutritional value of the food produced, and destroys the environment. All mass produced meats in this country are full of chemicals, drugs, enhancers, and preservatives and all milk is contaminated with radioactive fallout. Vegetarianism would be better for the environment, consume less resources, and be healthier for us.

All our food is vegetarian, that is, no meat, dairy, or eggs. While we encourage awareness of vegetarianism for political and economic reasons, this policy also has several more immediate benefits. The potential for problems with food spoilage are greatly reduced when dealing strictly with vegetables. Members of the group tend to eat a more healthy diet as they learn more about vegetarianism. Teaching people about the health benefits of a vegetarian diet actually creates a healthy, caring attitude towards ourselves, others, and the planet as a whole. Therefore, the food we prepare is strictly from vegetable sources. People know and trust this standard for Food Not Bombs food whenever they come to our table.

Not Bombs

It will take imagination and work to create a world without bombs. Food Not Bombs recognizes our part as providing sustenance for people at demonstrations and events so that they can continue participating in the long term struggle against militarism. We also make it part of our mission to bring our message to other progressive movements. We attend other organizations' events and support coalition building whenever possible. We work against the perspective of scarcity which causes many people to fear cooperation amongst groups. They believe that they must keep apart to preserve their resources. We try to encourage the feelings of abundance and the recognition that if we cooperate together, all become stronger.

Being at the center of the action with our food is part of our vision. Sometimes we organize the event; sometimes we provide food at other organizations' events.

Providing food for more than one day is more than just a good idea, it is a necessity. Either the movement can seek food service from the outside and be dependent upon businesses which may not be progressive, or we can provide for ourselves. Clearly, it is Food Not Bombs' position that it is far more empowering if we provide for our own basic needs, in ways which comprehensively support the movement. We have provided food at long term direct actions such as the annual Peace Encampment sponsored by the American Peace Test at the Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site; tent cities which highlight homelessness and hunger in San Francisco, Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C.; and the regular feeding of the homeless in highly visible locations in many cities throughout the country.

How Food Not Bombs Got Its Name

During 1980, a group of friends who were active in the protests against the Seabrook nuclear power project were searching for a way to make the connection between the issues of nuclear power and militarism. One of our many activities was to spray paint anti-nuclear and anti-war slogans on public buildings and sidewalks using stencils. One of our favorites was to spray paint the words "MONEY FOR FOOD NOT FOR BOMBS" on the sidewalk at the exits to grocery stores in our neighborhood. One night, after an outing of spray painting, we had the inspiration to use the slogan "FOOD NOT BOMBS" as our name. By having this slogan as the name of our group, our message would be clear. Even the media, by printing our name over and over again, would be getting the political concept 'food, not

bombs' to the public. No matter what they may say about us in their reporting, our name would say it all.

Omaha FNB

The Food Not Bombs chapter in Omaha is going on its tenth year. We serve every Sunday at 2 p.m. on the west end of the Gene Leahy Mall. We serve Vegetarian meals, pass out free clothing, and provide a friendly atmosphere for anyone who wants to eat. Anyone can start their own FNB. Omaha's FNB has been run by people of all ages and political beliefs who strives to build community through sharing food.